Designing Digital Libraries for Teaching

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Abstract
At the Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia (EPIC)[1] we are exploring the relationship between teaching resources and digital library content in creating the next phase of electronic resources for faculty and students. In developing our electronic publications over the past several years, we have focused primarily on aggregating high quality content, with a particular focus on grey literature and its uses in both research and teaching, and building the tools and functionality needed to make that content useful to specific user groups. This process has involved understanding patterns of research and teaching, as well as evolving user needs in specific disciplines—mirroring, in many ways, traditional publishing activities, but using the digital environment and the opportunities it offers for innovative design and functionality. This article deals with one such initiative.

Introduction
Our work at EPIC is taking a more innovative and experimental turn, and is focusing increasingly on the complex relationship between the "closed" world of the classroom and teaching tools, and the "open" world of the Web. How do we create digital resources that allow faculty to develop and use teaching tools that are embedded within a rich digital library environment? Can we allow students to explore freely the vast array of research tools available through the Web, while still providing an appropriate level of guidance concerning how to select and evaluate the sources that they find?

The vast amount of information now available can be either a benefit or an obstacle to effective research and teaching, depending on how successfully we address the challenge of making this information meaningful to users with diverse experience and needs. One of our current projects has focused on exploring this question of how to find the right balance between directed and unfiltered presentation of digital content for students and faculty. As we move into the final phase of this project, it is useful to consider what has been achieved, and what next steps are possible as a result of the work we have completed. Here I will describe the major accomplishments of this project and discuss ways in which we can build on this work to develop other digital resources that can connect and enhance teaching and research in higher education.

The DART Project
This project, Digital Anthropology Resources for Teaching (DART)[2] is exploring the potential of digital resources for the teaching of undergraduate anthropology. The project is also investigating digital-library technologies that will allow for the flexible delivery and customized use of these resources in an "open" web environment. Columbia University and the London School of Economics (LSE)[3] are partners in this project. At Columbia, DART is a collaboration among the Department of Anthropology, the Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia (EPIC), and Academic Information Systems (AcIS)[4]. At LSE, the Department of Anthropology and the Centre for Learning Technology have participated in the project. Drawing on the collective skills and existing infrastructures of these institutions and organizations, DART's goal is to initiate a meaningful and sustainable transformation of undergraduate education as well as create new models of digital resources that connect research and teaching materials.

The project began in February 2003 with a series of conversations among the Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia (EPIC), the Chairs of the Columbia and LSE Anthropology departments, and the Centre for Learning Technology at LSE. This group collaborated on writing a funding proposal to the National Science Foundation (Columbia) and the Joint Information Systems Committee (LSE) for a project designed to explore new models for the use of digital resources at our institutions.

Columbia and LSE received grants to create resources that integrate online teaching tools with digital library materials. Over the course of the project we have been able to build a digital library teaching environment and to test the usefulness of this resource